

# Minister's Message



Every October, in hundreds of community halls across Saskatchewan, farmers and their non-farming neighbours come together to break bread and to celebrate the end of another successful harvest. Over plates heaped high with roast beef and chicken, mashed potatoes, pyrogies and cabbage rolls, old friends share stories about harvests current and past, and give thanks for the privilege of having spent another year working at the hardest, best job in the world: farming.

Not coincidentally, October is also Agriculture and Food Month in Saskatchewan, a time when the entire province celebrates our long and proud agricultural history, and recognizes the crucial role agriculture continues to play in both our economy and our way of life. Agriculture affects one in every four jobs in Saskatchewan. It accounts for nearly one-third of all our exports. Saskatchewan is now more than just a producer of raw materials. The food processing side of the industry has come into its own over the past several years. The food and beverage industry is now the largest manufacturing sector in the province, and accounts for over 20 per cent of all manufacturing shipments. The majority of these companies are located outside Regina and Saskatoon, and therefore make a significant contribution to the ongoing renaissance of rural Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan producers are growing more and more sophisticated. Producers are expanding into crops and foreign markets that would have been unimaginable 30 years ago. Lentils, chickpeas, flax, mustard, peas, herbs and spices have all taken their places alongside wheat, barley and canola in Saskatchewan's fields. Canola, itself, has become so common that we forget it did not exist 30 years ago, and that it was a product of Saskatchewan's plant research labs.

While canola was created for human consumption, the emerging biofuels industry is creating new markets and uses for it, as well as for other crops and by-products. Ethanol and biodiesel will help us mitigate the effects of climate

change, and will extend our dwindling supplies of crude oil. The demand for biofuel feedstock has also pushed up crop prices to levels we haven't seen in a generation or more.

High grain prices will affect the livestock sector, but Saskatchewan is, and will remain, a major producer of livestock in Canada and North America. More than one out of every four cows in Canada resides in Saskatchewan. Hog production has increased by over 150 per cent since 1997. We are the second largest producer of bison in Canada, and our farmed elk and deer herd is the second largest in Canada.

The last several years have seen the beginning of a turn-around in the fortunes of agricultural producers and rural Saskatchewan in general. You can feel the growing optimism in the countryside. This year, given the good harvest and high prices, we have even more reason to be hopeful for the future.

As we celebrate Agriculture and Food Month, I want to congratulate all the men and women who work in this challenging, infuriating, exciting and fulfilling industry. All of humanity depends on the work you do. A month is not long enough to thank you properly for the food on our plates and, now, for the fuel in our tanks.

A simple, heart-felt "thank you" will have to suffice.

Sincerely,

Mark Wartman  
Minister, Agriculture and Food

## Saskatchewan Biofuels investment opportunity (SaskBIO)

In June, the Province announced a new \$80 million program to help fuel the biofuels industry in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Biofuels Investment Opportunity (SaskBIO) program is an exciting opportunity for farmers and communities to get involved with this new and emerging industry, and to help Saskatchewan become a leader in the production of ethanol and biodiesel, not only in Canada, but throughout the world.

The SaskBIO program is a four-year, \$80 million provincial program that provides repayable contributions of up to \$10 million per project for the construction or expansion of transportation biofuels (ethanol or biodiesel) production facilities in Saskatchewan.

Corporations (including co-operatives), individuals or partnerships are eligible to apply for funding. To be eligible, applicants must have a minimum of five per cent farmer-community investment, and the minimum annual production capacity of a



new facility or the increased capacity of an existing facility must be at least two million litres per year.

In the coming weeks, a major advertising campaign will be launched to encourage investment within the province and beyond through the SaskBIO program.

As well, the department of Regional Economic and Co-operative Development, in partnership with the departments of Saskatchewan Environment, Industry and Resources, and Agriculture and Food, are currently developing a biofuels website, which will act as a hub of information for farmers, investors, and the general public. As the industry grows, so will the wealth of information. When people think biofuels, we want them to think Saskatchewan, and these activities will help to drive that interest.

Application forms for the SaskBIO program are now available. For access to program guidelines and application information, and for access to all biofuels information, please visit [www.saskatchewan.ca](http://www.saskatchewan.ca) and click on the banner "Green Fuels, Green Future."

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Ken Magnus, Regional Economic and Co-operative Development, at 306-787-0917.